

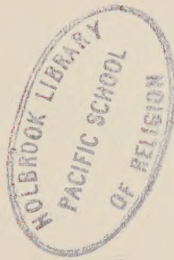
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World Council Assembly Opens in New Delhi

(New Delhi) - Jesus Christ is not the light of a race, a class, a culture or a period, but "He seeks out the darkness where it is to be found".

That was the keynote sounded here November 19 by Bishop Gottfried Noth of East Germany as he addressed the first evening session of the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches on the central theme of the 18-day meeting, "Jesus Christ, the Light of the World".

"As the Light of the world Jesus comes very close to this world, and that means the world as it actually is", declared Bishop Noth, who is leader of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony.

He told some 1,200 participants in the Assembly that the Church is "called to re-examine its witness and its service to see whether they are meeting the actual world". In so doing, he added, "we must be seriously concerned about the problems of our deeply-changing world".

"The social revolutions, the technical development, the problem of war and peace, the fear and distress of countless people", he said, "call for the love and faith of those who know that God so loved this world that He gave His only-begotten Son for it. Pious words are no substitute for expert efforts in this situation."

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Asian Churches Condemn Nuclear Weapons

(Bangalore) - A major nuclear war would result in genetic distortion of the human race and widespread destruction of civilized life, says the report of the Commission on International Affairs which was received by the East Asia Christian Conference in the closing stages of its five day long meeting here.

The report adds that continued nuclear testing could result in serious damage to life through radiation and that the development of nuclear weapons has led to cataclysmic possibilities uncontrolled by any discipline of either political ends or economic profit.

"Possession and testing of these weapons become less and less important either for a show of strength or for bargaining purposes between the power blocs", the report goes on. "However, there is no certainty that this factor will be sufficient to prevent nuclear war. There is the ever-present danger of mistake or a wilful act.

"It is our conviction that world security requires total and general disarmament which depends in turn on mutual confidence expressed in a system of collective security. In furtherance of this objective, it is open to the governments in Asia to join hands with all other non-nuclear powers in a self-denying undertaking never to seek possession of these weapons for any purpose.

"The recent action of Russia in preparing a test programme while pursuing negotiations for the cessation has increased mutual suspicion which makes such negotiation difficult", the statement said.

Clash on China

References to the People's Republic of China and a recommendation that it should be admitted to the United Nations led to a sharp clash. The representatives of the churches in Korea dissociated themselves from this part of the report.

The report said that if the People's Republic of China wished merely to adopt Communism as its economic and political policy this might be regarded as primarily its domestic concern, but Chinese Communism gives the impression of having become expansionist.

"We recognize the efforts made by China to get into friendly relations with some of its neighbours", the report goes on. "But we see no justification for its encroachment on Indian territory.

"Yet as Christians we recognize the importance of keeping open the channels of communication between China and the rest of the world. We reiterate the resolution of the World Council of Churches' Central Committee for the admission of China into the United Nations, for without China in the UN no worthwhile or binding agreement can be reached on such vital questions as disarmament, both conventional and nuclear."

The Conference, in receiving the report, recorded that the Korean delegation had dissociated itself from the proposals and had withdrawn from the meeting.

The report will be sent to all the member churches of the EACC for discussion and comment. EPS, Geneva

East Asia Churches to Study Growth of World Confessionalism

(Bangalore) - Plans for a thoroughgoing appraisal of the different world confessional organizations and of their effect on the younger churches were drawn up and approved at the recent meeting here of the East Asia Christian Conference.

This was a specially enlarged Continuation Committee meeting of the EACC and brought together 120 delegates from 48 churches in 12 countries, as well as guests, observers, and consultants from the US, Europe, and Africa.

It was agreed that the probe into world confessionalism should be made through the writing of papers on the issues raised by global denominational structures; the holding of two or three "situation conferences" where the issues can be discussed in terms of a specific situation, and a major conference to which leaders of the confessional movements, leaders in the missionary movement, and leaders in the younger churches will be invited.

A report from one of the EACC Commissions pointed out that within each confessional grouping there is taking place a debate concerning its place in the whole ecumenical movement: "The world confessional bodies are partly a result of the new ecumenical encounter. Their development enhances confessional loyalties and fellowship. They help to lift Christians out of local isolation, and aid them in surmounting national barriers.

"They do much to stimulate missionary concern and outreach. Their strong international ties often protect small groups of Christians from dangerous introversion and narrow nationalism. World confessional ties may be vitally useful to enable a church to serve without allowing the demands of a nation to denigrate its life.

"At the same time, the very vitality of these confessional loyalties often creates serious obstacles in the life of the younger churches. However good the intention, it seems that the expression of world confessionalism in increasingly complex institutional structures results in the perpetuation and reinforcement of patterns of paternalism and continued exercise of control.

"As the world confessions rediscover their traditional heritage, the World Council of Churches should endeavour to help that such confessional renaissance occurs within the larger fellowship of the ecumenical church so that it leads to enriched understanding of the whole Gospel for the whole world."

New Secretariat

The conference also agreed to set up a new secretariat for international affairs. It acknowledged that East Asian Christian communities have not become as involved as they should be in helping and serving in the political, social, economic, and cultural changes that are taking place in East Asia.

The secretariat will maintain a liaison between the EACC and the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, and will prepare a practical handbook on state and religion in East Asia.

The conference approved a budget of \$85,600 to carry on its programmes in 1962. Of this total expenditure only \$37,000 will be sought from bodies outside Asia.

EPS, Geneva

WCC to Aid Youth Volunteers

(New Delhi) - The World Council of Churches is expected to establish shortly a secretariat to assist young people who wish to volunteer for service abroad. Announcement of the proposal was made by the Rev. Roderick S. French, Youth Department executive secretary, in an address to the 160 young people from all over the world, attending a week-long conference here.

Mr. French said it is hoped that the programme "will stand as a sign of the ecumenical dimension of service, will facilitate the churches and movements in taking part in this modern opportunity and will help to remove some of the frustrations of willing but bewildered young people".

He said that the new secretariat does not mean that the WCC will launch any new programmes itself. He also stressed that young people must realize that the usefulness of unskilled and inexperienced people is "greatly limited so that serious preparation is the first step for those wishing to go abroad under whatever auspices".

Pointing to the success of the World Council's annual work camp programme throughout the world, Mr. French indicated that its continued effectiveness largely depends upon its adaptability to changing situations.

The Youth Department is studying the possibility of launching a few year-round camps. "This would permit the deepening of the inter-action between the international camp and the local society as well as provide opportunity for a longer term of voluntary service," he said.

In another session the young people from all over the world were told that the Christian Gospel cannot be identified with European culture, industrial society or political democracy.

This belief was expressed by Dr. Samuel Mathai, secretary of the University Grants Commission of the Government of India. He noted that the Christian task in Asia today calls for a deeper understanding of non-Christian religions and total involvement in a revolutionary situation.

The youth gathering brought together 110 youth participants and 50 stewards who will be attending the Third Assembly. Among the youth participants are 31 from Asia, 23 from Europe, 20 from North America, 11 from Africa, five from the Middle East, and four from Latin America. All were nominated by their churches through national ecumenical youth councils.

EPS, Geneva


New Pay Plan Recommended for Overseas Church Workers

(Bangalore) - Church workers serving in another country should have their salaries fixed by the sending and receiving churches jointly.

This recommendation was made in a report accepted by the East Asia Christian Conference from one of its commissions.

The report urges that salaries should primarily be based on the cost of living in the receiving country and the financial position of the church's own workers.

"In regard to the whole problem created by the disparity in remuneration between workers from within Asia and most of those from outside the region, the EACC requests the World Council of Churches to urge the churches and their mission boards in the West to continue and increase their efforts to find practical, Christian solutions."



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The report also calls for more attention to be given to what it means to receive a missionary. "If he is to be truly received by and identified with the church, that church must be fully responsible, as his host, for his welfare and his work", the report goes on.

"A major responsibility rests on the receiving church to provide training in language and orientation to the situation in that country. The churches in the EACC region should recognize their responsibility to provide such training for the missionaries they receive from outside the region."

EPS, Geneva

Visser 't Hooft Cites Unity Gains

(New Delhi) - Desire for Christian unity is no longer the concern of the few but the preoccupation of the many, the general secretary of the World Council of Churches said here November 19 at the opening session of the Third Assembly.

"Large churches which had not participated in the new dialogue between the churches now feel the time has come for them to make their contribution", Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft said.

The once revolutionary principle that widely divergent churches "could be on speaking terms with each other is now widely accepted and applied", he said. The nearness in time of the recent Pan-Orthodox meeting in Rhodes, this World Council assembly, and the Second Vatican Council gives an impression of "general ecumenical mobilization", he said.

A danger is, he said, that new perspectives for reunion of the churches gives rise to a fear that "an external union will be forced upon church members who are not ready for this and do not desire it". Dr. Visser 't Hooft dismissed this fear as groundless.

He said that those who expect reunion "tomorrow" will be disappointed. But those who are aware of the difficulties but believe the time has arrived for "courageous and responsible steps towards church unity" must not be disappointed.

Dr. Visser 't Hooft said that if the Assembly accepts the advice of the Central Committee the Council will become with "one very important exception" (Roman Catholicism) a body in which all major Christian confessions are strongly represented. It will "embrace a greater variety of expressions of the Christian faith than have ever been brought together in one movement".

He cited the application of the Orthodox Church of Russia for membership in the Council as a major event in the history of the ecumenical movement. "In this way a tremendous opportunity is offered to us, the opportunity that a real spiritual dialogue shall take place between the Eastern churches and those which have their origin in the West. If we accept this opportunity our ecumenical task will not become easier but will be greatly enriched."

The admission of the Russian Church would mean, he said, we have not only to count with ancient divergences between the Christian East and the Christian West but also with the modern tensions between the political East and the political West.

"But what right have we to refuse this task if it is laid upon us? We can only pray that we may be worthy of such a great responsibility."

Dr. Visser 't Hooft welcomed the presence of five Roman Catholic observers chosen and authorized by the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity. This is the first time such observers have attended a World Council assembly.

"The nature of our relations with the Secretariat is that of information about our concerns. Thus we have been able to mention specific points (such as the question of religious liberty) which we would like to see clarified by the coming Second Vatican Council."

EPS, Geneva

